



# HIGHLIGHTS FROM UTAH'S BOATING LAWS & RULES



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### UTAH BOATING PROGRAM MISSION STATEMENT

To sustain and enhance the quality of boating by providing the facilities, education, enforcement and the coordinated and balanced stewardship necessary to ensure enjoyable, safe, lawful and environmentally acceptable boating experiences on Utah's waterways, now and into the future.



## BOATING IN UTAH

Utah has some of the most beautiful waterways in the nation. Boating adventures include whitewater rafting on Utah's rivers, waterskiing on glassy reflections of red rock at Lake Powell, sailing on Bear Lake, trolling for trophy fish at Strawberry, or canoeing quiet, mountain lakes.



With an ever-increasing demand on Utah's limited number of rivers, lakes, and reservoirs, boaters must use their water recreation resources wisely. Boaters have the responsibility to practice and advocate safe and ethical use of our waterways. This responsibility includes properly registering boats, learning and obeying boating safety laws and rules, and sharing waterways with other boaters, swimmers, and anglers.

Utah's Boating Program aims to educate boaters about laws and rules to protect public safety and natural resources. These efforts are funded by boat registration fees, a state tax on gasoline used in motorboats, and through federal boating safety grants. This brochure, *Highlights from Utah's Boating Laws and Rules*, outlines the basic responsibilities of Utah's boaters. For a complete copy of *Utah's Boating Laws and Rules*, contact Utah State Parks and Recreation.



## WHAT IS CONSIDERED A BOAT?

According to the *Utah Boating Act*, a boat is defined as every type of watercraft used or capable of being used as a means of transportation on water. Boats such as personal watercraft, rafts, float tubes and “kick” boats are subject to Utah’s boating laws and rules.

## DOES MY BOAT NEED TO BE REGISTERED?

Only motorboats (including electric motors) and sailboats must be registered and numbered, unless exempt. Boats exempt from Utah registration and numbering include: 1) sailboards and 2) properly registered motorboats and sailboats owned by residents of another state that have not been in Utah more than 14 days in a calendar year.

Boats owned by Utah residents, but registered out-of-state, also must be registered in Utah if used on Utah waters.

## HOW DO I REGISTER MY BOAT?

Boat registration is processed by the Utah State Tax Commission, Division of Motor Vehicles. To obtain a registration, submit a signed application in person or by mail to the Utah Division of Motor Vehicles. The annual registration fee is \$10 plus a 50 cent search and rescue surcharge designated to go to the county. Your application must be accompanied by a validated tax certificate from the county assessor.

A registration card and two annual registration decals will be issued to you. The bow number assigned to each boat must be displayed on the boat with the registration decals as described below. The bow number stays with the boat as long as it is registered in Utah.

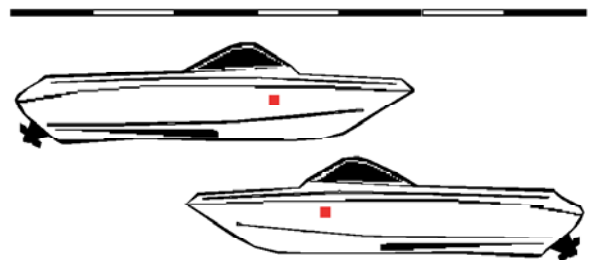
The registration card must be on board the boat for which it is issued and be available for inspection whenever the boat is in operation.

## WHERE DO I ATTACH THE REGISTRATION DECALS AND BOW NUMBERS?

The bow number must be painted or permanently attached to each side of the forward half of the boat. Numbers must be vertical block characters at least three inches in height, and read from left to right. They must contrast with the background color and be distinctly visible and legible. Spaces or hyphens, equal to letter width, must separate letter groupings and numeral groupings.

The bow number consists of the prefix letters UT, one to four numerals and two suffix letters. Example: UT 1234 AA or UT-1234-AA.

Registration decals are to be displayed three inches aft of the bow number on each side of the boat. Only current year decals may be displayed.



*Attach the Registration Decals and Bow Numbers as shown.*

## WHEN DOES MY BOAT REGISTRATION EXPIRE?

Utah boat registrations expire on April 30 each year. Renewal notices usually are mailed prior to expiration. If you do not receive a renewal notice by mail, take the old registration card to the Utah Division of Motor Vehicles to renew your registration.

Owners who purchase boats from a dealer may be issued a 30-day temporary registration certificate by that dealer.

Boat owners must notify the Utah Division of Motor Vehicles of change of ownership or address within 15 days of the change. The sale, transfer, destruction or abandonment of a motorboat or sailboat terminates its registration.

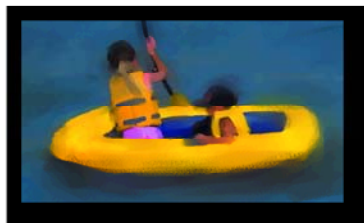
## WHERE DO I LOOK FOR THE HULL IDENTIFICATION NUMBER?

The hull identification number (HIN) on all boats built after November 1, 1972 is permanently affixed to the rear of the transom, usually on the upper right corner. The number is required by federal law and must appear on the registration application.

The HIN consists of 12 letters and numerals at least one-quarter inch in height indicating manufacturer, hull serial numbers and/or letters, and model year and/or month.

## WILL MY BOAT BE TITLED?

Yes, if it was manufactured in 1985 or after. Boats built before 1985 cannot be titled according to Utah law.



## EQUIPMENT REQUIREMENTS

### WHAT SAFETY EQUIPMENT MUST I HAVE ON BOARD MY BOAT?

#### PERSONAL FLOTATION DEVICES

Personal Flotation Devices (PFDs), more commonly known as "life jackets," are illustrated below. Utah Law requires that all boats have at least one Type I, II, III or V U.S. Coast Guard approved PFD of proper size, in serviceable condition, and readily available for each person aboard. All PFDs must be used in accordance with the age, weight, activity, and use restrictions listed on the U.S. Coast Guard approval label.



**Type I PFD** - Off Shore Life Jacket: Provides the most buoyancy and turns most unconscious wearers to a face-up position. Effective for all waters, especially open, rough or remote waters where rescue may be delayed.

**Type II PFD** - Near Shore Buoyant Vest: Turns some unconscious wearers to a face-up position. Intended for calm, inland waters or where there is a good chance of quick rescue.

**Type III PFD** - Flotation Aid: Designed so wearers can place themselves in a face-up position. There are many designs for specific water sports and activities.

**Type IV PFD** - Throwable Device: Designed to be thrown to a person in the water, grasped and held by the user until rescued.

**Type V PFD** - Special Use Device: Designed and approved only for activities listed on label.



Be sure each PFD on your boat is in a serviceable condition. A PFD is not in a serviceable condition when: the fabric is ripped, torn or punctured; any buckle, zipper, or connector is broken or missing; the PFD has been modified or altered; or, the U.S. Coast Guard approval label is not legible or has been removed.

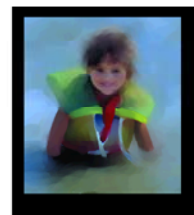
U.S. Coast Guard approved inflatable PFDs are rated as Types I, II, III, or V, and are more comfortable and less bulky to wear, especially during the heat of the summer, than traditional PFDs. Some models automatically inflate upon submersion in the water, while all models can be manually or orally inflated. If you plan to wear an inflatable PFD, read the approval label for age and use restrictions, and learn how to check, inflate, and care for the PFD. Inflatable PFDs may not be used by persons riding on or operating a PWC, towed behind a vessel, children, or boating on rivers.

Additionally, boats 16 feet or more in length must carry at least one Type IV throwable device that is immediately accessible and within easy reach of the operator or passenger(s) on board.

Passengers 12 years of age or younger must wear a Type I, II, III or V U.S. Coast Guard approved PFD when the boat is in operation. Type V PFDs must be used according to the requirements on the label. Children do not have to wear PFDs while inside an enclosed cabin area of boats 19 feet or more in length.

Each person 1) being towed on water skis or other devices or 2) operating or riding on a personal watercraft, must wear a properly fitted U.S. Coast Guard approved PFD.

On rivers, every person on a boat must wear a properly fitted U.S. Coast Guard approved PFD. For persons older than 12 years of age, PFDs may be loosened or removed only while on designated flat water river sections. Contact Utah State Parks and Recreation for a listing of designated flat water river sections within Utah.



## WEAR YOUR LIFE JACKET!

National statistics indicate that 75 percent of people who drowned in boating accidents would have survived if they wore a PFD. A boating accident can happen at any time you are on the water. Plan ahead. It is a good, safe boating practice to always wear your life jacket.

## FIRE EXTINGUISHES

All motorboats, unless exempt, must carry a serviceable U.S. Coast Guard or Underwriters Laboratory marine approved fire extinguisher.

Open-construction, outboard motorboats less than 26 feet long, without permanently installed fuel tanks, are not required to carry a fire extinguisher if they do not carry passengers for hire. However, fire extinguishes are strongly recommended.

Each fire extinguisher is classified by letter and Roman numeral according to the type of fire it can extinguish and the size of extinguisher.

Marine Fire Extinguisher Classification

Classification (Type-size)	Foam (Minimum gallons)				
	Carbon Dioxide (Minimum pounds)				
	Dry Chemical (Minimum pounds)				
	Halon/Freon (Minimum pounds)				
BI	1.25	4	2	2.25	
BII	2.5	15	10	-	

Unless exempt, boats under 26 feet must carry at least one B-I fire extinguisher. Boats 26 feet to less than 40 feet must carry two B-I's or one B-II. Boats 40 feet to 65 feet must carry three B-I's or one B-I and two B-IIs. Engine compartments with a fixed extinguishing system can carry one less B-I extinguisher.

## VENTILATION

All closed-construction, gasoline-powered motorboats must have ventilators to remove explosive vapors from engine and fuel tank compartments. Be sure the boat is well ventilated before starting, especially after fueling. Since gasoline vapors are heavier than air, the vapors will accumulate in the bottom of a boat and create a very dangerous condition.

## BACKFIRE FLAME CONTROL

All inboard gasoline engines must be equipped with a backfire flame arrestor on the carburetor. The flame arrestor must meet U.S. Coast Guard approval or comply with Underwriters Laboratory or Society of Automotive Engineers marine standards.

## NAVIGATION LIGHTS

All boats must display navigation lights while operating on Utah waters between sunset and sunrise.

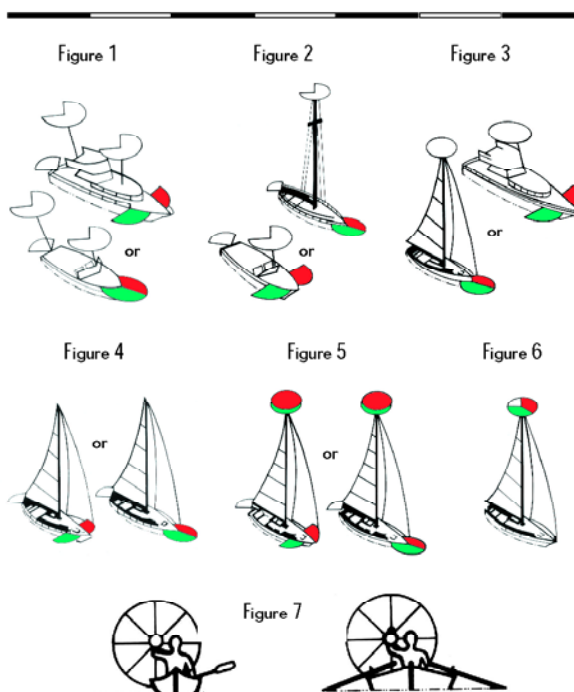
**Motorboats** less than 40 feet must display navigation lights as shown in figures 1, 2 or 3. Motorboats 40 feet to 65 feet long must display navigation lights as shown in figures 1 or 2.

**Sailboats** must display navigation lights as shown in figures 4, 5 or 6. Sailboats under power must conform to motorboat navigation light requirements.





**Manually propelled boats** may display navigation lights required for sailboats or a white light (flashlight or lantern) displayed in sufficient time to prevent a collision. See figure 7.

**Personal Watercraft** may not be operated between sunset and sunrise, even if they are equipped with navigation lights.

**Boats adrift or at anchor** must display an all-round white light unless anchored in a designated mooring area.



### Visible Range

Location of Lights on Vessel	Less than 40 ft.	40 ft.-60 ft.	Degrees of Arc Lights
 Masthead	2 miles	3 miles	225°
 All-round	2 miles	2 miles	360°
 Side Lights	1 miles	2 miles	112.5° (each color)
 Stern Light	2 miles	2 miles	135°

Boats may only display lights as outlined above except, a spot light or other non-navigational light may be used intermittently to locate a hazard to navigation.



## WHISTLE OR HORN

Boats from 16 feet to less than 40 feet long must have a whistle or horn capable of producing a four-to-six second blast of sound. Boats 40-65 feet long must have a horn and a bell. A whistle or horn is recommended for boats less than 16 feet in length.

## BAILING DEVICE

All boats, not of a self-bailing design, must have a bail bucket or mechanical means for pumping the bilge. It is always a good idea to have a bail bucket. If the battery dies the bilge pump will not work.

## SPARE PROPULSION

Boats less than 21 feet long must have at least one spare paddle, oar, or motor, on board.

## MUFFLERS

All motorboats must be equipped with a muffler system in good working order and in constant operation to prevent excessive noise. It is illegal for a motorboat to exceed a noise level of 90 decibels (*if boat is manufactured before January 1, 1993*) or 88 decibels (*if manufactured on or after January 1, 1993*) with the measurement taken one meter to the rear of boat with the engine idling. It is also illegal to have muffler cutouts or a muffler bypass system that is operational. A motorboat may not be operated in

a manner that will cause it to emit more than 75 decibels of noise at the shoreline.

## MARINE TOILETS

Many sources of pollution enter Utah's waterways. Human sewage from boats is one source of pollution that poses environmental and health problems. It is important that you dispose of your human sewage properly while boating. It is illegal to deposit human waste into Utah's waters or on lands adjacent to these waters. Marine toilets must be emptied at dockside or at other approved sanitation facilities.

Please keep Utah's waterways clean and beautiful by not littering or polluting in or around them. **Pump It - Don't Dump It!**

## OTHER EQUIPMENT SUGGESTIONS

Boat owners are advised to carry a flashlight, first aid kit, boarding ladder, tool kit, extra line (*rope*), spare spark plugs, spare bilge plug, spare propellers, anchor, U.S. Coast Guard approved visual distress signal, etc.



## OPERATION REQUIREMENTS



### WHAT DOES THE LAW SAY ABOUT BOATING UNDER THE INFLUENCE?

Utah law prohibits a person under the influence of alcohol and/or drugs to operate a boat. Conviction of boating under the influence may result in: the loss of your motor vehicle driver license, a fine, mandatory jail sentence, community service work, and rehabilitation assessment. A person under age 21 may not operate a motorboat with any measurable amount of alcohol in his body. In addition, a person may not authorize or knowingly permit a vessel owned by him, or that is under his control, to be operated by a person who is under the influence of alcohol and/or drugs. Statistics indicate that a boat operator or passenger with a blood alcohol content (BAC) of .10 is more than 10 times as likely to die while boating than a boat operator or passenger with a zero BAC. The risk grows to more than 50 as the BAC level approaches .25.

The operator of a motorboat may not have an open container of an alcoholic beverage while the boat is in operation. A person operating a boat on Utah waters is considered to have given consent to take any chemical test requested by a peace officer who feels the person has been operating a boat while under the influence of alcohol and/or drugs. The arresting officer may seize and impound the offender's boat, trailer, and tow vehicle.

Refusal to take a chemical test is admissible in any civil or criminal action or proceeding, and may result in the loss of your motor vehicle driver license.

### WHAT ARE BOATING STRESSORS?

Natural boating stressors such as sun, noise, vibration, motion, wind and spray, and even darkness can affect your coordination, judgment, and reaction time. After nearly four hours of being on the water, these stressors will produce a reaction time similar to having a blood alcohol level of .10. Alcohol adds to these stressors and makes a deadly combination. Rest frequently, on land, to reduce the effects of these stressors.

### IS THERE A SPEED LIMIT ON THE WATER?

Wakeless or idle speed is required within 150 feet of another boat, a person in or floating on the water, a water skier (*except those you are towing*), a shore angler, a launch ramp, a dock or a designated swimming area. You are responsible for any injury or damage caused by your boat's wake. Be courteous and stay away from others.

### HOW OLD MUST A PERSON BE TO OPERATE A MOTORBOAT OR SAILBOAT?

Persons under 16 years of age may operate a motorboat when accompanied on board and under the direct supervision of a person at least 18 years of age. Persons under 16 years of age may operate a sailboat if they are under the direct supervision of a person at least 18 years of age.

### WHAT IS THE OPERATOR AGE AND EDUCATION REQUIREMENT FOR A PERSONAL WATERCRAFT?

Persons 12 to 17 years of age may operate a PWC, (*Jet Ski, Waverunner, Sea Doo, etc.*) alone provided the operator completes a boating education course accepted by Utah





State Parks and Recreation and has in their possession the certificate issued by the course provider. In addition, to the education requirement, persons 12 to 15 years of age must operate under *direct supervision* of a person at least 18 years of age. A person less than 18 years of age who has not met the above requirements may not operate a PWC unless accompanied on board by a person at least 18 years of age.

For a list of division-accepted boating education courses or to register a student in Utah's PWC Education Course, call Utah's Boating Hotline at 801-538-BOAT (2628) within the Salt Lake area or 800-RIDE-PWC (7433-792) outside the Salt Lake area.

## WHAT IS MEANT BY DIRECT SUPERVISION?

Direct supervision means within sight at a distance in which visual contact is maintained by the adult responsible for the young boat operator.

## DO I NEED TO INSURE MY PWC?

All PWCs must carry proof of liability insurance while in operation on Utah waters. Minimum liability insurance requirements are \$25,000/\$50,000 bodily injury/death, \$15,000 property damage; and \$65,000 per accident.

Nonresident owners are exempt if the PWC is in Utah for less than 90 days in a calendar year, unless the owner's home state also requires insurance coverage.

Utah State Parks and Recreation recommends that all boat owners carry liability insurance.

## WHAT ABOUT WATER SKIING?

Boat operators must maintain a safe course with a proper lookout when towing a person on water skis or other devices. In addition to the operator, an observer, at least eight years old, must be on board to watch and communicate with the skier. The operator shall have a passenger display an international orange flag at least 12 inches square when the skier is down in the water.

Water skis and other towed devices may be used only between sunrise and sunset. All persons being towed must wear a properly fitted U.S. Coast Guard approved PFD.

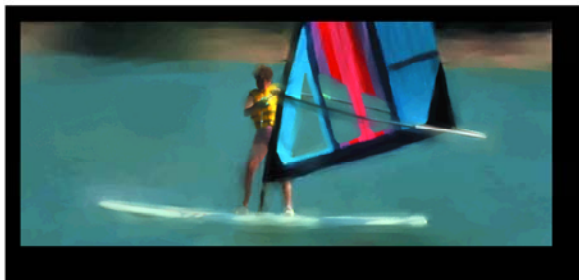
You must have room on board your boat, within the boat's maximum persons capacity, for any person(s) being towed behind the boat.

## MAY PASSENGERS RIDE ON THE BOW OR OTHER EXTERIOR PARTS OF A BOAT?

Passengers may not ride on the bow, except in designed seats of motorboats less than 16 feet long when operating above a wakeless speed.

Passengers may ride on the bow of a boat 16 feet or longer, except on Lake Powell, if they straddle an upright support on the rail without blocking the operator's view.

No one may operate any motorboat above wakeless speed with passengers or operator sitting on seat backs, gunwales, transom or motor cover unless there are adequate rails to prevent a person from falling overboard.



## WHO HAS THE RIGHT OF WAY *(Rules of the Road)?*

Sailboats and manually-powered boats usually have the right of way over motorboats. Motorboats should stay clear of sailboats and manually-powered boats and should not create a wake that may cause them trouble. Sailboats and manually-powered boats must yield right of way when overtaking motorboats and when a motorboat is adrift or at anchor.

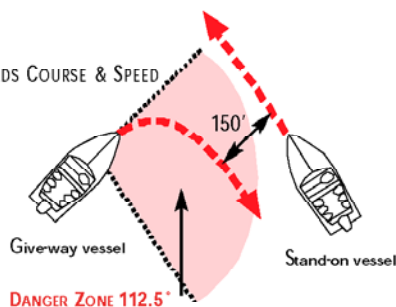
In overtaking and passing situations, the boat being passed has right of way, and the passing boat is required to stay clear. When meeting another boat head-on, stay to the right. When two boats are crossing paths, the boat on the left must slow down and allow the other boat to pass.

On rivers, boats going downstream usually have the right of way.

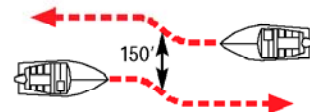
In narrow channels, boats underway must stay right of the middle of the channel.

### CROSSING

STAND-ON VESSEL HOLDS COURSE & SPEED



### MEETING HEAD TO HEAD



IF ALL ELSE FAILS, RULES MAY BE BROKEN TO AVOID A COLLISION. COURTESY IS ALWAYS THE BEST POLICY.



## WHAT SHOULD I DO

### IF THERE IS A BOATING ACCIDENT?

#### *If you are involved in a boating accident:*

Help other people involved in the accident.

Notify local law enforcement officers immediately by the quickest means of communication available if anyone involved dies, disappears, requires treatment beyond first aid or if combined property damage exceeds \$2,000.

Give your name, address and identification to any injured person or owner of property that is damaged in the accident.

Submit a completed and signed boating accident report to Utah State Parks and Recreation within 10 days.

Boating accident forms are available from Utah State Parks and Recreation or any boating ranger. Information in accident reports is confidential.

## U.S. AIDS TO NAVIGATION

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### WHAT DO WATERWAY MARKERS TELL ME?

Waterway markers give you important information to make your boating experience safe and enjoyable. They identify restricted or dangerous waters. They tell you where wakeless speed is required and where boating is not allowed. They mark channels and alert you to diving activities. Familiarize yourself with these markers:



#### CONTROLLED AREA

Controls boating activities in a designated area. Restrictions such as a speed limit, no fishing, ski only, slow no wake, no ski or no motorboats may be indicated within the orange circle.



#### DANGER!

Use extreme caution! Navigational hazards such as rocks, reefs, rapids, construction or snags may be indicated inside the orange diamond.



#### BOATS KEEP OUT!

Boat access denied! Restricted areas such as waterfalls, swim areas, or dams and spillways may be indicated outside orange crossed diamond.



#### INFORMATION

Provides non-regulatory information such as directions, distances, places, food, repairs and supplies inside an orange square.



#### CHANNEL MARKER

White "can" buoy with vertical red stripes. Marks the center of a channel or "safe water."



#### CHANNEL MARKER

Green "can" buoy. Marks the left side of a channel when proceeding upstream or returning to harbor. May be odd numbered.



#### CHANNEL MARKER

Red "nun" buoy. Marks the right side of a channel when proceeding upstream or returning to harbor. May be even numbered.



#### MOORING BUOY

White buoy with a blue band. May have a white light or reflector.



#### ALPHA FLAG

Indicates boat involved in diving activities. Boats must remain 150 feet from flag unless in diving party.



#### DIVERS FLAG

Indicates diver(s) in the immediate area. Boats must remain 150 feet from flag unless in diving party.

## OTHER SAFETY AND COURTESY TIPS

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**Swimming** in launching, docking, mooring or harbor areas is prohibited. "No Swimming" areas are designated for your protection. Swimming from an unanchored boat can create a dangerous situation unless one person remains on board to operate the boat. Wind can cause the boat to drift, leaving swimmer(s) stranded in the water.

**Courtesy Docks** are for your convenience. Be courteous by leaving your boat there no longer than 15 minutes.

**Boat Ramps** are for launching and retrieving only. Vehicles should be parked in designated parking areas and never left unattended on a launch ramp. Be ready to launch your boat before moving onto the ramp. Complete your launch quickly. When retrieving your boat, pull it away from the ramp before wiping it down and securing it for extended travel.

**Emergency Situations** require advance planning. Think about what to do if someone falls overboard or if there is a





fire, breakdown or collision. Practice putting on your PFD in the water and throwing a Type IV PFD. Know various distress signals such as slowly and repeatedly raising and lowering your outstretched arms. If your boat capsizes, it will usually float. Put on a PFD and stay with the boat for additional flotation and so you may be seen easily. Mount your fire extinguisher so you can locate it in an emergency and away from probable fire sources.

**Carbon Monoxide.** When any engine is running the potential exists for carbon monoxide poisoning. Contact Utah State Parks and Recreation for additional information and a warning sticker for your boat.

**Propeller Injury.** Avoid injury. Always turn your engine(s) off when people are in the water near the prop.

**Weather** is unpredictable. Watch and be prepared for changing conditions.

**File a Float Plan.** Tell someone where you are going and when you will return. This can save your life if you break down or have an accident.

**Learn Boating Safety.** Contact Utah State Parks and Recreation for a free home study course or information on boating safety classes offered by other organizations or on the Internet. Successful completion of a boating safety course may lower your boat insurance rates.

## CONTACTS

This pamphlet contains **highlights** from Utah's **Boating Laws and Rules**, and answers frequently asked questions about boating in Utah. For a complete copy of **Utah Boating Laws and Rules**, contact:

### Utah State Parks and Recreation

1594 West North Temple, Ste 116

PO Box 146001

Salt Lake City, UT 84114-6001

(801) 538-7220

(801) 538-7458 (TTY)

Boating Hotline: 801-538-BOAT (2628) within the Salt Lake calling area or 800-RIDE-PWC (7433-792) outside the Salt Lake calling area, or visit our web-site at: [www.stateparks.utah.gov](http://www.stateparks.utah.gov)

For boat registration information, contact:

### Utah Division of Motor Vehicles

210 North 1950 West

Salt Lake City, UT 84134

1 (800) 368-8824

(801) 297-7781 Salt Lake calling area

*Utah State Parks mission . . .*

*Enhancing the Quality of Life through Parks, People and Programs*



STATE OF UTAH  
NATURAL RESOURCES  
Division of Parks & Recreation

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